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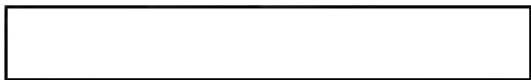
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PANAMA: Government leaders, in contrast to their earlier doubts, reportedly are now optimistic that the UN Security Council meeting next week will yield significant advantages for Panama.

General Torrijos and Foreign Minister Tack reportedly believe that the Council meeting will create enough international and domestic pressure to force Washington to make significant concessions in the canal treaty negotiations. [redacted]

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In line with their plan to present a "reasonable" image during the meeting, the Panamanian leaders apparently intend to present their grievances on the canal issue in a low-keyed fashion, leaving Peru, the other Latin American member of the Security Council, to make a strong attack against the US on a wider range of issues. The canal issue is a natural take-off point for an exposition of the favorite Peruvian foreign policy themes--sovereignty and defense of natural resources--and Foreign Minister De la Flor can be expected to make the most of the opportunity. Tack visited Lima earlier this week to work out a game plan.

Another factor contributing to Panamanian optimism is their relative success in obtaining commitments of attendance from Latin American foreign ministers. About a third now are scheduled to come, and others may show up. Although foreign ministers from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico will not attend, the representation will be sufficient for the Panamanians to claim strong Latin American backing for their position. [redacted]

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FROG-7s in Syria



| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Launcher weight (with rocket) | about 13 tons |
| Rocket weight | 5,000 - 6,000 pounds |
| High explosive warhead weight | 1,200 pounds |
| Maximum range | 37 - 43 miles |
| Propellant | solid |

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USSR-SYRIA: Moscow reportedly has supplied Damascus with a tactical surface-to-surface rocket.

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[redacted]
the rocket system--known as the FROG-7--has been in Syria since at least February. It could have arrived earlier because substantial quantities of Soviet military equipment have been flowing into Syria since accelerated deliveries to Damascus began last August. The number delivered is not known.

The FROG-7 is widely deployed with Warsaw Pact forces and was introduced into Egypt in late 1970. It is fired from a wheeled vehicle and has a maximum range of about 43 miles. Although the rocket can be equipped with a chemical or nuclear warhead, those supplied to Syria most likely would carry a high-explosive warhead.

The rocket could be used against Israeli troop concentrations, artillery positions, vehicle parks, and civilian population centers. It lacks the necessary accuracy, however, to be effective against heavily fortified positions, such as those on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

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SYRIA: The constitutional referendum on Monday is likely to be marred by public disturbances.

Many Syrians, especially conservative religious and political elements, are strongly opposed to the new constitution and to the predominance it gives to the Arab Socialist Baath Party. This opposition erupted into strikes, rioting, and bombing in key urban centers late last month, and reportedly were quelled after the government used strong force. As many as 75 persons, including police, may have been killed or wounded, and scores of others were arrested.

Two features of the draft constitution are the primary focus of attack. The draft recently approved by the national legislature does not provide that Syria is a Muslim state, which is a sharp break with tradition in Arab countries. Moreover, the document declares the Baath to be the leading party both in the society and in the state. In the face of mounting opposition, President Asad arranged for an amendment to require that the president be Muslim, but this is seen as only a half-measure.

The draft constitution almost certainly will be declared approved--probably even by a wide margin--but many Syrians will boycott the referendum. Several prominent religious leaders have been publicly calling for such a boycott.

Should disturbances break out, the security forces have the capability, and Asad has indicated the determination, to put them down using whatever force is necessary.

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